

BRITISH COLUMBIA AND VANCOUVER'S ISLAND.

COMPARATIVELY few years have elapsed since Canada was a mere tract of unreclaimed forest land. It was looked upon as a country which the length and severity of its winter rendered almost unfit for the purposes of settlement. It lay beyond the pale of civilization, and its cheerless solitudes deterred all except the most adventurous or the most reckless spirits from endeavouring to form a home there. Now the forest has receded before the backwoodsman's axe, the Indian village has given place to the populous town. Well-built railroads and steam-ships convey over its plains and rivers a flourishing trade, which may compare advantageously with that of older countries. But that is not all: this country, so newly peopled, has lately become the starting-point of a fresh exodus. Ten years ago—not yet ten years ago—the first report came to Europe of the discovery of gold in California. Every one remembers the rush which, in the first violence of the gold fever, was made towards the West. In the United States the merchant deserted his store and the mechanic his craft, wages rose to a point which made even successful gold-hunting hardly a more speedy road to wealth than plodding labour, but the labourer was not to be detained, and the man who a year before had appeared not to have a thought in the world beyond the plough he followed, was now to be seen working as if for his life, with pick and rocker, in his six-feet 'claim' at some diggings in California, or washing up to his waist in water the auriferous soil of its streams. In course of time, however, the floating population which thus rushed in from all parts of the globe upon California, settled down into comparative tranquillity; the search for gold lost its first character of wild adventure, and sunk into a recognised field for industry, in which labour and capital ensured a handsome, though not an excessive remuneration. It would be curious to trace how the successive discoveries of the precious metals have proved instruments in the hands of

Providence for enlarging the bounds of civilization. It seemed at first as if the lawless crowds which hastened to the scene of each fresh discovery must introduce only turbulent misrule, and that the fierce passions by which they were swayed must result in anarchy and confusion. But out of the seeming chaos rose a fair superstructure of order. Steady industry gradually replaced the wild excitement of the gold fever. No sooner had this miracle been worked in the wilds of California, than the same scene was re-enacted, almost with the same characters. The hills and valleys of Australia were full of gold, and the adventurers of the world met in a new field.

Now, for the third time, the gold fever has risen fiercely. It was, if we remember rightly, at the end of June, 1858, that a rumour went abroad in this country that the main land which lies to the north and east of Vancouver's Island was highly auriferous. The public were not long left in suspense. A ship arrived at Aspinwall laden with some four thousand pounds' worth of gold. The San Francisco papers headed their columns with the cry of 'GOLD! GOLD! GOLD!—News from the British gold-fields. Gold received from Frazer River.' And a leading article in the same paper announced 'IMMENSE EMIGRATION' in the largest type. The last announcement, made contemporaneously with the first, shows indisputably the extreme rapidity with which the fever spread, and the prompt measures which were taken by the border-ruffian gold-washing population of California, who belong to the class which always leads the way on these occasions.

Before alluding further to the progress and development of the mines, it may be well to say a few words as to the situation and soil of the new colony. British Columbia extends from the Rocky Mountains to the sea, between the forty-ninth and fifty-fifth parallels of latitude. The continent of America is intersected in a direction parallel with the coast by two mountain ranges, which rise abruptly from

the east, and slope gradually towards the Pacific. The chain nearest to the sea is called throughout its length the Cascade Range. The other, which is about equidistant from the Cascade and the Rocky Mountains, is rather a spur of the latter than a distant chain, and the country between it and the Rocky Mountains is almost entirely filled up with hills in its northern part, and terminates to the south in the great tobacco plains. At the foot of the western slope of the mountain which we have just described runs the Columbia River. This magnificent stream winds among the mountain gorges towards the south, watering a picturesque country, and occasionally expanding, even in the earlier parts of its course, into lakes of considerable extent. At the 49° of latitude it enters United States territory, and about 46° north latitude suddenly changes its direction to the west, forms the boundary between Oregon and the newly-constituted Washington territory, and falls into the Pacific at Astoria.

Frazer River, which, with its tributary, Thompson River, is the scene of the new gold discoveries, takes its rise in a little lake on the eastern side of the Cascades, and running parallel with them, receives the Thompson River from the west, passes through a gap in the mountain, and falls into the Gulf of Georgia.

The climate of this region is less variable than that of England. The mean temperature on the Pacific coast is stated by Sir John Richardson to be about 20° higher than on the Atlantic between the same parallel of latitude. The prevalence of westerly winds may perhaps partly explain this difference of temperature, and the fact that vegetation is much earlier there than in England. Figs, lemons, melons, vines, and many other fruits proper to the Tropics, are the indigenous growth of this favoured shore. The splendid work

of Mr. Lorin Blodget,* on the *Climatology of the United States*, explains fully the startling difference which exists between the east and west coasts of America as regards the direction and distribution of their isothermal lines. Alluding to the district which we are now discussing, Mr. Blodget points out that now that the result of his observations is fully collated and determined, and the climatological capacity of British Columbia established, it is much more easy to understand the descriptions of those who have travelled there, and to connect the somewhat meagre accounts yet written. It is surprising, he writes, that so little is known of the great islands and the long line of coast from Paget Sound to Sitka, ample as its resources must be even for recruiting the transient commerce of the Pacific, independently of its immense intrinsic value. To the region bordering on the Northern Pacific the finest maritime positions belong throughout its entire extent, and no part of the west of Europe exceeds it in the advantages of equable climate, fertile soil, and commercial accessibility of coast. Mr. Blodget justly remarks, that the reason for most of the neglect of this region lies in mistaken views of its climate, and that the peculiarities of much of the Lake Superior district are such as to perpetuate the mistake. With the unusual severity of the last two or three winters there, it appears incredible that the country at the west rising towards the Rocky Mountains should be less severe. But the increase of temperature westward is quite as rapid as it is southward to New Mexico, and the Pacific borders on the fiftieth parallel are wilder in winter than Santa Fé.

The Indians,† who till now have held undisputed possession of it, are, or were till immigration taught them distrust, if not hostility, friendly and well-disposed towards the whites. They have an instinct-

* *Climatology of the United States, and the Temperate Latitudes of the North American Continent.* By Lorin Blodget. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott and Co. 1857.

† The writer is indebted for the following information respecting the Indian tribes to a gentleman who has long lived among them.

tive knowledge of a Supreme Being, or Great Spirit; this is forcibly illustrated by the customs they observe in disposing of their dead. Great lamentations prevail in the whole tribe on the death of a chief; the women howl and cry, the men beat a hollow box, producing a sound like a kettle-drum, accompanying the noise with a monotonous chorus or chant not altogether deficient of musical charm. This drumming continues for weeks after the death of a chief, and the whole tribe, men, women, and children, participate in the ceremony. The dead are placed in their canoes, and suspended to the branches of trees in some solitary island or quiet bay. Hundreds of boxes, rudely carved in cedar-wood, may be seen stored away in these sequestered cemeteries, painted with hieroglyphic characters in red and black colours. Carved images, dressed in tawdry style with such fragments of European clothes as they may possess, are mounted on pedestals, and appear to perform the part of sentinels over the dead.

They have feasts and holidays, which they calculate by the number of moons; their doctors are selected from the most aspiring of their tribe; they have some knowledge of herbal medicines, and treat all cases with a certain degree of skill; they are affectionate and kind to their offspring, and a good and friendly feeling exists toward members of their own tribe; they marry amid the local tribes, but quarrels the most fierce and deadly often arise. An Indian thinks little of murder if he imagines he has cause for it. No kin is strong enough to quell the ire of a revengeful savage. They are without exception treacherous when they have anything to obtain by treachery; they lie by instinct; thieving is their natural propensity.

The staple article of food is fish—salmon—dried in the sun in summer sufficient for winter stores. They cultivate the potato profitably to themselves: no better can be produced in any part of the world.

A bulbous root of which they are particularly fond is found in the plains; in size and shape it is some-

thing like an onion, but known in the native language by the name of Cu'mas.

They are dirty in their habits: their hair, which is not curly like that of the negro, is usually matted together in an inextricable tangle. As a rule, the men and women are in stature small, but improve in this respect as you advance to a higher latitude. The natives of Queen Charlotte's Island are perhaps the most bold, fearless, treacherous, and thievish class of savages of any on that coast. At the same time they are extremely ingenious and clever. They have been known to make very good imitations of pictures from the *Illustrated News* on boxes of their own manufacture, and carvings in solid ivory from photographs. They have a natural genius for imitative art. There is a similarity of countenance between these Islanders and the Japanese.

The above remarks apply only to the Indians of Vancouver's and Queen Charlotte's Islands and the N. W. Coast. The inland Indian is a different character, more noble in his manner, lives more by hunting than fishing, and is more to be depended upon than the coast Indians.

The country is easily accessible by the means which are in ordinary use in the country, horses and canoes, roads, &c. The lower part of the Frazer River is not adapted to vessels of any considerable size. Boats and canoes are alone of real use, but we have heard of vessels measuring three hundred tons getting as far as Fort Langley, some fifty miles up; and an American steamer, the *Surprise*, which for a long time was used to run between Sacramento and San Francisco, was fitted up for ocean service on the announcement of the gold discoveries, and was advertized to run between Victoria and Fort Hope, about a hundred miles from the mouth.

The geological formations observed in the Sierra Nevada of California are similar in character to those observed in the auriferous regions of Frazer River; indeed the auriferous regions all over the world correspond so closely with

each other, that a careful examination of the rocks and strata of one would suffice to an expert geologist for a certain intimation that gold would be found in the others. Count Strezlecki brought home specimens and plans from the mountains of Australia which evidenced so close a resemblance between them and the auriferous districts of the Ural Mountains, that Sir Roderick Murchison, who had closely examined the latter, was enabled to predicate with certainty that Australia too was rich with gold. It was not long, when once attention was called to the subject, before gold was successfully sought in the ravines running from the great eastern chain of Australia and the alluvial drift which had been derived from it by the action of the streams and the weather.

Gold (says Mr. Domer) exists in a pure state, is of a bright reddish yellow colour; it will not oxidise or rust like the ignoble metals, and being generally the produce of disintegrated rocks, is carried away by the floods into the valleys, and to distances varying according to the size of the metallic fragments and the force of the current, till finally it is deposited in dark glens and deep water holes. Again, when the current has been intercepted by protruding banks or checked by sand bars, the river's heavy soil has to be even wrung from it, to be hidden in holes or crevices in the bank, and sown as golden seed throughout the sands of the river-bed, to afford after long ages the harvest of the digger. Otherwise, when the stream has been diverted into another channel, the metal remains in the parched water-course, often absolutely on the surface, and often to be reached by merely scratching through the layer of alluvial drift which time has spread over it.

It is stated by Mr. Cooper, who has himself been a resident of several years in Vancouver's Island, that the Hudson's Bay Company had been aware of the existence of gold for some years before the secret, by getting abroad, put it out of the power of the Hudson's Bay Company to stop the immigration which was sure to ensue. Their monopoly was only maintainable

while the energetic population of the Californian and Australian mines remained in ignorance of the existence of their idol.

There is among the miners a kind of instinct, for we can call it by no other name, by which the gold is scented from afar. These adventurous spirits think nothing of a journey from California to Australia and back upon a 'prospecting' tour; and those who have lived among them, and know the keen eye for the geological formation of a country which they possess, can easily believe that the well-kept secret of the Hudson's Bay Company ceased to be a secret the moment a practised gold miner darted his inquiring eye on the granite and metamorphic rocks, and the great quartz boulders in the valley of the Frazer. The gold is usually found in connexion with the Palæozoic rocks, or in recent tertiary drifts; it is, however, except on the coast, rarely found in the rock itself, but in the drift sand or gravel, sometimes (as in the Ballarat diggings, the richest in Australia) in a kind of rich purple clay, under successive layers of turf, black alluvial soil, grey clay, red gravel, then slightly auriferous clay, and streaked clay. The stratum immediately beneath the 'blue clay,' as it is called, is hard white pipeclay, beneath which gold is not found at all.

In examining a river for gold, says Professor Bate Jukes, it is the inside curve of its bends, where sand-banks and spits are accumulating, or wherever the force of the current is slackened, and the materials carried by it are consequently dropped, that should first be searched.

Gold is harder than either tin or lead, softer than silver, copper, or iron; consequently, writes Mr. Domer,* 'if a small scale or nugget scratches tin and lead, and is scratched by silver, copper, or iron, and if it sinks rapidly in water, it may fairly be assumed to be gold.'

When the news of the discovery of new gold fields reached the Californian mines, great was the excite-

* John Domer, *British Gold-fields*, p. 38.

ment among the diggers, and great the tumult in San Francisco. The Sacramento stages were overloaded with passengers from Nevada, all bound for the coast. Sonora lost half her population; Stockton became lifeless, and her streets almost deserted, except when the stages went out for the coast. Many of the old-established quartz mills stopped working, and Chinamen were set to work on the Sacramento railroad, because white labour was not to be had. 'Blankets for Frazer River,' 'beans for Frazer River,' 'shovels for Frazer River,' were ticketed up in all the streets of San Francisco. Wages rose to such a point that grooms made a favour of working for £190 per annum, and carpenters were not to be had at twenty-eight shillings a day—more than £500 a year. Masons and bricklayers, thirty-five shillings a day. Shepherds went off to the mines unless paid at the rate of £240 per annum and their keep. Money, that sensitive barometer of public confidence, rose to a ruinous price. Trade to the interior of course suffered a temporary depression; and farmers, gardeners, boarding-house keepers, and others, who lived not on the mines but on the miners, were in despair. Many joined the general exodus; and we learn from the California papers that a common form of placard in the shop-windows was, 'Selling off at cost, and going to Frazer River, as sure as you are born.' Traders, contractors, and cattle merchants hastened up the country with 'ventures' of their various wares. All sorts of stock were in great demand; and as one of the routes to the mines lies overland, the demand for beasts of burden was very considerable among the population which rapidly congregated at Paget Sound on their way to the mines.

However the trade of San Francisco and of the interior of California may be temporarily depressed (and no doubt the sudden emigration of such large numbers of people will exercise a depressing effect), the whole of the Pacific coast within the range of the attraction will doubtless be intimately benefited. The most convenient route from

all parts of the world to Frazer River must, for some time at least, and until new modes of transport overland are organized, be through San Francisco. Many, no doubt, will go no further, but will take up their permanent abode in California. The first blush of novelty will soon wear off, though it is doubtful whether even yet the excitement is at its height; and though every fresh discovery will have the effect of communicating the 'gold fever' to some who had before resisted its influence, things must ultimately sink down into a state of quietude, or perhaps even give place to some new and startling discovery among the mountain ranges to the north. The accounts which have reached us from the seat of excitement—we had almost written the seat of war—if carefully examined, show that the persons who first quitted California were the 'loafers'—vagabonds who had been hanging about the bar-rooms of the Pacific cities, out of luck, and idle; they were succeeded by a respectable and steady German and Scotch emigration, which will not fail ultimately to infuse order and regularity amongst the miners. Too much capital and skill is already pre-engaged in California to permit of any fears for the steady prosperity of that country. Responsible firms, composed of men who would have nothing to say to Stampedes, as the rapid emigration is nicknamed, even if they were not unavoidably detained by more solid reasons than disinclination, have large investments in machinery for tunneling, sluicing, quartz crushing, and the various other kinds of mining. Their earnings are steady, though not so brilliant as the 'big strikes,' to use a mining term, which sometimes bless a lucky gold-hunter, and drive a whole population wild; and they obtain a fair remuneration for the skill and capital employed. The worst that they can dread is a slight increase of wages, and a considerable temporary scarcity of labour. Bad enough, certainly, but not such absolute ruin as the panic-stricken press of California would have us believe. The eagerness to be off and to arrive on the scene

of the new discoveries, is of course partly owing to the exaggerated accounts of the extreme richness of the deposit, but in part to the mercurial temper of the miners. The first effervescence of gold is of course worked out in California and Australia. The idle go because they like change of scene, and do not care about any hardship except the hardship of steady labour, which is of course necessary in the old diggings, and which they hope to escape by a visit to the new. Certain it is, that from Yreka to San Diego the whole population is in motion. Accounts state that policemen are employed at the shipping offices to keep off the crowd, and to prevent them from squeezing each other to death in their mad anxiety for tickets. The new gold-fields were inaugurated by a tragedy. 'Charles Adams,' we quote from a San Francisco correspondent, 'said to have been the first white man who mined on Frazer River, was shot dead by his partner, a Mr. Macdonald, who, according to report, stopped him with a bullet while running off with the gold-dust which they had dug in common.' When we hinted above that as possible that the Frazer River mines would not improbably be displaced by some newer gold field, we were not altogether speaking at random. As yet no perfectly reliable information has been received as to the extent of the gold fields. It is, however, an important point, and one which will materially affect the position of the colony as a permanent field for the investment of capital or for attracting emigration. It is stated that gold has been discovered at a distance inland from the Frazer River, and judging from Californian and Australian precedent, it would seem natural to suppose that as the rivers bear gold, the hills from which they rise are gold-bearing too. A confirmation of this surmise is found in the fact that the gold found low down on the Frazer is very fine—so fine indeed that blankets are put by the miners into their rockers, in order to prevent the gold-dust from falling through. It has been always observed that the nearer you approach to the gold fields and moun-

tain diggings, the larger become the nuggets that are discovered. This, of course, is the result of the difference in weight. The larger particles of gold carried down by the streams from the mountains are naturally first deposited. The Indians, who have found their gold not in the rivers but in the mountains, have picked up large nuggets. Old miners declare, too, that they believe the 'placers' and ravines in the mountains will be found incomparably richer than any in California, because, as they suppose, the Frazer's River gold-fields are only a continuation of the auriferous tract of California; and in California itself the diggings increase in richness in proportion as they lie farther north. The British Columbian mines, on account of the freshets which descend early and with great violence, and of the ice which is borne down by the impetuous current, can never be worked more than half the year, so that it is most important that the prosperity of the colony should not depend only upon the gold-fields of the Frazer and the Thompson.

The price of the necessaries of life at the diggings exceeds all belief. The *Times* correspondent, writing on the 14th of June, gives among other items,—flour \$100 per barrel (worth in San Francisco eleven or twelve), pork \$1 per lb., tea from one to four dollars per lb., and so on in proportion. There were no fresh provisions. Salt salmon and black flour were the staple articles of food. But the mining tools were the most exorbitant of all; rocker irons costing from \$15 to \$30 each, which would not be worth a couple of shillings in England. At Hill's Bar they would fetch £6. One of the Californian papers makes the quaint announcement that there had just before been a 'revival in religion,' but adds that the gold discoveries had knocked it cold.

The immigration as yet has been mostly from California, but as cheap passages are offered by way of New York and Panama, Europeans will no doubt be attracted in great numbers. The Australian mines will also send a large proportion, not

only on account of the excitable and roving disposition we have alluded to above, which leads a miner always to prefer, in mining phrase, work on his own hook, to associating himself with others, but because of the scarcity of water, which renders gold-hunting a matter of the greatest difficulty. This want can never be felt in British Columbia; indeed the great drawback to the complete success of the mines will be the too great quantity of water, as soon as the river begins to swell.

The system on which the Crown lands are sold in Australia renders it a matter of considerable difficulty for an emigrant of the poorer class to acquire land. This is a subject into which we do not propose to enter here, but it is one which nevertheless will have some weight in determining emigrants thence to try their luck in the Frazer district instead. The system in Vancouver is nearly as bad as that in Australia. But such strong representations have been made to Government, that no doubt it will be amended in Columbia.

From the first moment the excitement was great as to which is to be the great city of the West. San Francisco has till the present time had no possible rival. It seems even now presumptuous to think that little Esquimalt* can compete with the city of the golden gate. But if the gold yield holds out, and the rush of people continues, especially when the island of Vancouver is no longer in the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company, the geographical and physical advantages of Esquimalt will have fair play, and she may well be looked upon as in every respect equal, if not superior, in natural advantages to San Francisco. It is, however, unlikely that she will, at any rate for many years, attain to the same position as her rival. As we have already pointed out, any prosperity which may accrue to one will inevitably react favourably on the other. The chances are, therefore, that though Esquimalt may rapidly increase, the relative posi-

tions of the two will not be reversed, or even very materially altered. If indeed the anticipation in which we indulged in a former number† should be realized, and a railroad through British territory should be completed, Esquimalt must necessarily receive an impetus that she could not get in any other way.

At the present time Victoria looks, say all accounts, like a regular mining town. This, to one accustomed to such scenes, suggests an unwonted bustle and stir. Groups of men with rough beards and hair swagger and stagger about. The prevailing costume consists of a red or blue flannel shirt, and a pair of trousers stuck inside Wellington boots. No one goes unarmed. An axe, a bowie-knife, a rifle, and a pair of 'Colt's' stuck ostentatiously into a rough leather belt, are the necessities of life, tobacco and strong drinks its luxuries. Rough songs from rougher throats fill the air, at least so much of it as is not filled with oaths; quarrelling goes on in every language under heaven. The shops display spades, picks, shovels, pans, blankets, and rockers, all ticketed 'for the mines.' There are more drinking saloons and bowling alleys than dwelling houses: the former are built of rough lumber, most of the latter are simple tents.

There is a great disproportion in the number of men to women. Placards and newspaper bulletins are outside nearly every house with the latest news from the mines. Everything about speaks of gold-hunting; the talk is of 'bits' and chunks, big strikes, and rich claims: everything indicates that the yellow fever is at its height.

In this description we are simply recalling the general aspect of a mining town. Victoria, before the influx, was a little place of, we believe, some one hundred inhabitants. It has now increased to a population of some seven or eight thousand. These of course are constantly fluctuating, and live chiefly under canvas.

Our readers already know our

* Victoria is now the settlement; but, for reasons given hereafter, Esquimalt must be the town site. The word is pronounced with an accent on the penultimate syllable.

† See *Fraser's Magazine* for July, 1857.

opinion of the Hudson's Bay Company and of their government. We do not intend here to enter upon the subject. It is, however, due to Governor Douglas to say, that by all accounts, and we have seen a great number, his firm, yet mild and conciliatory policy has been eminently successful in keeping in some sort of order a population which in all probability could have been restrained by no other means. Police have been appointed both in Victoria and at the mines. This was the more necessary, as there was every danger of disputes between the Americans and the Indians. The former, who in 1849 were accustomed to shoot any Indian who dared to show his face in a mine, were here, owing to the smallness of their numbers, obliged to submit without retaliation to insults which made their mustachios curl with rage. This, to men accustomed to regard 'Injuns' as vermin to be exterminated, must have been very galling.

Although no one now doubts the existence of immense quantities of gold in the Frazer and Thompson districts, yet all were not equally fortunate in their search for it. Towards the end of July the water became too high for successful mining. The miners remained in idleness on the banks, waiting for the freshet to go down sufficiently to allow them to resume their labour. Meanwhile provisions began to run short. Hemmed in by perpendicular walls of rock, unable to spread themselves over the country for fear of the Indians, with provisions at starvation prices, and money rapidly diminishing, what wonder if many returned to California disappointed, and what wonder, too, if many never returned. Starvation and disease came down and took their toll of the gold hunters.

The evil, bad as it was, would have been aggravated, if it had not been for the promptness and energy of Governor Douglas, who sent up stores of food, and sold it at prices necessarily enhanced by the difficulty of conveyance, but yet not entirely unattainable by the crowd, who must otherwise have perished by starvation. That horrible fate

actually befel a considerable number of persons who ventured incautiously to penetrate into the interior in search of the hill diggings, which the miners all expect eventually to find.

There are as yet no means of transport, and though the country is rich in gold, gold will not feed a starving man. To force a way over ravines and through forests, to carry provisions, arms, blankets, and tools, is no easy matter; and even when the adventurer has arrived at the far off El Dorado, he must hasten back ere his stock of food be exhausted, or die unhelpt and unseen.

Game is not plentiful. Bears and elks are found, but the supply cannot be depended upon; and a party who should trust to their rifles for provision would be likely to fare badly. The bears are described by those who have tried them as quite uneatable, or rather palatable only to men whom starvation has compelled to put daintiness aside. The writer of this article, however, gratefully remembers an occasion when bear's meat appeared to him delicious. The party to which he belonged were not in the Frazer River country, but far to the east of the Rocky Mountains. Their flour had been injured by the upsetting of their canoe, and they had been on short allowance of rusty pork for some time, so that the judgment of the party may very probably have been biassed when they decided *nem. con.* that bear meat was very like lamb, only a great deal better. It is possible too that the animal they devoured with such appreciatory appetites was of a different species from the unsavoury bear of New Columbia.

It is only fair to give to Mr. Douglas all the praise which his energy and talent have so well deserved. The points in which he has failed are just those for which the system which he administers, and not himself, is responsible. The impracticable and illegal claim to the exclusive right of trade was gracefully withdrawn as soon as it was clearly shown to be impossible to enforce it. This and Mr. Douglas's

subsequent conduct with regard to the despatch of provisions, shows him to be a man of discretion and ability.

Turning from the gold diggings, whose attraction at the present moment has made us devote to them so considerable a quantity of our limited space, we must give a rapid sketch of the coast and of the adjacent island of Vancouver. The gold-bearing district, so much of it at least as has yet been discovered, lies between the two inland mountain ranges; but to the west, where the Cascades slope down to the shores of the Gulf of Georgia, the country is full of a commodity scarcely less valuable—namely, coal. The coal formation extends, with some intervals, all up the western coast, as far as Fort Simpson, in lat. 54° or 55° . Extensive coal fields are also found on the island of Vancouver, opposite to the mainland, from which it is separated only by the Gulf of Georgia. Victoria is situated at the south end of the island, a little to the south of lat. 49° , and is prevented by its insular position alone from belonging, according to the boundary of 1846, to the Washington territory. The shores of the mainland present to the waters of the gulf a long and precipitous sea wall of broken cliffs, and the channel between it and the island is reported to be difficult navigation, and indeed to be entirely unsafe for any vessel unprovided with a pilot. Entering the Straits of St. Juan de Fuca from the ocean, there is plain sailing as far as Esquimalt harbour; indeed by hugging the southern shore of Vancouver, 'keeping the land on board,' as sailors call it, the most clumsy navigator would blunder straight into that harbour. Beyond that point the tide, which runs with the rapidity of a sluice down Queen Charlotte's Sound, encounters so many islands, first among the Broughton Archipelago, and afterwards toward the south of the Gulf of Georgia, and is so often and suddenly forced through narrow and rocky passages, that it renders upward navigation a matter of serious difficulty. The western shore of the island is indented with

many apparently fine harbours, but they will all ultimately be found useless, some on account of the great depth of water, which would render it impossible to anchor without actually running on shore, and some on account of the difficulty of entering them. The island itself is densely wooded, but so far as it has been explored, presents to view nothing but a succession of abrupt hills and very narrow valleys. A friend of ours being asked what he saw in the interior, said 'a range of rocks.' What was then beyond that? 'Another range of rocks.' And beyond that? 'Another range of rocks.' Many gentlemen practically acquainted with the subject expect that these rocks will ultimately be found largely auriferous.

The boundary line between British possessions and American territory was fixed by the treaty of 1846. It was to run west along the 49th parallel of latitude, until it touched the Gulf of Georgia, and thence southward along the centre of the ship channel, and westward along the Straits of St. Juan de Fuca to the sea.

We invite the earnest attention of our readers to this point. There are two readings of this treaty. The letter of the treaty declares that the boundary shall run south down the centre of the ship channel, after touching the Gulf of Georgia; but the shore, as a glance at the map will show, at the point where the 49th parallel runs into the gulf, forms a bay. The Americans contend that this is a separate bay, and not the Gulf of Georgia, and that the southing of the boundary must therefore commence at Point Roberts, some miles further to the west than the spot whence, as the British contend, it ought to start. A little to the southeast of Cape Roberts there is an island. If the line runs south from Cape Roberts, the ship channel alluded to in the treaty is to the westward of that island, to the westward consequently of the Islands of St. Juan and Lopez, and the line passes between a precipitous rock and Esquimalt harbour, within half a mile of the main island of Vancouver. If, on the other hand, the line

runs south from the point where the 49th parallel really touches the gulf, it passes to the eastward of the islands, and near the American shore. This may appear a small matter, but when it is remembered that the Straits of St. Juan de Fuca will at no distant time be the Gibraltar of the Pacific, and that whoever holds the rock opposite Esquimalt harbour holds the key to the straits, and can dictate terms to all passers up the channel, it will easily be seen that it is almost impossible to over-estimate the importance of this apparently trifling difficulty.

The only possible object for which the Americans can wish to possess the island in question is for the purpose of erecting a fortification there, and overawing our trade. If the Commissioners, who are now on the spot and engaged in surveying the line, do not decide this point in our favour, we had better make a present of Vancouver's Island to the Americans, and ask them to give us what they please for British Columbia, which will be just nothing, for they can take it for nothing, or rather it will naturally fall into their hands, and it will be worth nothing to us.

But if Vancouver's Island goes, adieu to our trade supremacy, our easy access to China, India, Australia, our railroads connecting the Atlantic and Pacific, the gigantic future which otherwise awaits British North America. Suez will be lost some day. It is a broken reed to lean upon. And then, if the Straits of St. Juan de Fuca are ours, we shall substitute easily an invulnerable approach to the East for the one that has been lost. If that too has gone, we shall have nothing to do but to sit down and wait for Macaulay's New Zealander to come and look at our ruins, and meanwhile to curse the folly and incapacity of the treaty-maker.

About nine years ago the government of the island was handed over to the Hudson's Bay Company, on the condition that they should form a settlement there. It was, how-

ever, no part of the policy of the Company to form such a settlement as that contemplated by the charter. Indeed their acts have sufficiently shown that it was quite the reverse. They monopolized all the best land, and so far from inviting colonization, they religiously kept a secret which would have saved them all trouble of inviting emigrants, for the emigrants would come of themselves. They knew of the existence of gold for years, but they never alluded to its existence. Mr. Labouchere, in the most unaccountable manner, assisted to keep the secret. It appears by the Report of the Hudson's Bay Committee of last year, that Mr. James Cooper in his examination stated that gold had been discovered near Fort Colville.* The British public heard this intelligence for the first time, and we have endeavoured to describe the excitement which it has caused. But Mr. Labouchere was at that time in possession of a dispatch dated 16th April, 1856, and received 30th June, 1856, announcing the discovery of gold, which he did not submit to the Committee, although it had been a year in his possession. In January, 1857, he had received dispatches confirming the news from the same official. How, therefore, these two dispatches, which would have thrown so much light on a discovery deeply interesting to the public, and so rigidly concealed by the Hudson's Bay Company, escaped Mr. Labouchere's recollection, it is impossible to say. A still more startling announcement is, that the Hudson's Bay officials have known for 'several years' of the existence of gold over hundreds of miles of country. This announcement was made in the *Times* of August 27th, in the following words. The writer is the *Times* correspondent, and dates from San Francisco, July 15th:—

I may add that I have the distinct authority of Governor Douglas, and of one of the chief factors who has long resided in the interior, for stating publicly that for several years back they

* There are two Forts Colville; the old fort is within the American territories, but the new one, near which the gold was first found, is to the north of the line. It is not marked in most maps, but it is on the south shore of Flat Bow Lake.

have had evidences of the existence of gold being found in many places extending over hundreds of miles of the country to which the notice of the world is now attracted, and that both these gentlemen believe this auriferous country to be rich and extensive.

A letter had appeared in the *Times*, signed J. C., not improbably the James Cooper who gave evidence to the same effect before the Committee, dated 31st May, in which the writer, a colonist at Vancouver (the only one, we believe, with one exception, whom the Hudson's Bay Company had attracted there), stated that the company had been aware of the existence of gold for twenty years. This letter must have had just time to go out to Victoria when the *Times* correspondent was 'authorized' to write as above. It is difficult to resist the inference that the Hudson's Bay officials, in their anti-colonizing spirit, kept the discovery quiet till it was blown abroad in England, and then made a merit of necessity and told the whole truth.

Victoria, as the site for a considerable town, would not answer at all. It has no water and no harbour, both indispensable requisites. The site on which the town must be built is the point of land which lies between Esquimalt harbour and Fort Victoria. This promontory is from a mile and a quarter to seventy or eighty yards in width, and possesses good drinking water all the year round. This is not the case in Victoria. Indeed, the latter appears to have been selected by the Company only with reference to the small trade which they keep up there, and without anticipating the great influx of population and tonnage which will eventually belong to it. The harbour of Esquimalt is surrounded on three sides by high rocks, and its shape is so irregular that only a small portion of its full extent can be seen at a time.

It is the more important that, at starting, the proper position for a town and harbour should be at once fixed upon, because from thence to Acapulco, some three thousand miles distant down the Mexican coast, and north as far as Sitka, in

Russian America, no harbour exists with the exception of San Francisco. Many parts of the island are favourable for agriculture, but until a regular survey has been made it is impossible to speak on that point with any precision. The Company, on their arrival, appropriated to themselves ten square miles round Victoria, and sold the coal mines at Nanaimo, some seventy miles to the north, to a Company which is sometimes distinct from the Hudson's Bay Company, and sometimes identical with it, according to the exigencies of the case.

It is difficult to arrive at the truth with respect to this partnership. The evidence appears to prove that a select few of the Hudson's Bay Company form the Puget Sound Company. The charter provided that if the colonizing experiment failed they were to be reimbursed; but they never attempted to settle anybody but themselves; and then, because the settlement which they prevented did not take place, they demand the repayment of a large sum (it was £87,000 and odd in 1856, and must be much larger now), which they have expended upon themselves. Moreover, as the charter provides that the Crown, if it resumes its rights, shall do so 'without prejudice to such dispositions as may have been made in the meantime by the said governor and Company,' the Puget Sound Company, or the Hudson's Bay Company under an alias, will remain in possession of the valuable minerals, and have its expenses paid into the bargain, unless some Parliamentary Don Quixote will break a lance with this mysterious windmill.

The coal mines at Nanaimo have been worked more or less ever since 1853. Mr. Fitzwilliam saw them there, and described them as being close to the sea-shore, which was so precipitous and deepened so rapidly that a vessel of five hundred tons could lay alongside. Nobody, he says, could credit the extent and value of the fisheries unless they judged from actual observation. Immense quantities of salted salmon are annually sent down to the Com-

pany's stores in the Pacific. Salmon is quite a staple article of food among the native population, who resisted the ingress of gold miners with pertinacity at first, lest they should deter the fish on which they depended for subsistence from ascending the rivers to spawn.

We have already explained at some length* the necessity which exists for railroad communication through British territory between the Atlantic and the Pacific. Since we wrote, projects have been set on foot, and some are already commenced, for establishing a line of railway from Halifax to Quebec. Another company carries mails, by steamboat and canoe, from Toronto to the Red River, and they have obtained a charter for prolonging the operations beyond the Rocky Mountains. This will of course be a work of time; but it is not difficult to see that at no distant period the prophecy which we then made will be fulfilled. Great schemes can only be gradually brought to conclusion. The various companies who have these works in hand are starting from small beginnings, but slow and steady wins the race. We may mention for the information of any who may intend

to go out to the gold-fields, that of the various routes to Vancouver, that by Panama is the quickest. The West India mail packets start for the Isthmus on the 2d and 17th of each month. The length of the voyage is twenty-two days. Trains run across to Panama every day, thence to San Francisco steamers take about fourteen days. Small steamers take the miner up to the Frazer, calling at Victoria for permits, &c., and land him at Fort Yule, one hundred and fifty miles up the river, in the midst of the diggings.

The second route is that overland, through Canada and the United States. Railways and steamers run as far as St. Paul's in Minnesota, and thence a distance of 1200 miles across the Rocky Mountains takes you to the diggings. Expeditions are being fitted out in Canada and the States for this route. Waggon's pass the Rocky Mountains at the Kootanie Pass. The writer remembers a miner in the California fever days, going across alone on foot, and trundling his worldly goods in a wheelbarrow.

The third route is, without change of conveyance, round Cape Horn.

BETA MIKRON.

* See *Fraser's Magazine*, July, 1857.

